

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Serial No. 10/715,962

Remarks

The various parts of the Office Action (and other matters, if any) are discussed below under appropriate headings.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102 and § 103

Claims 1-2, 6, 9, 11-12, 15-16, 20-21 and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Wang et al.¹

Claim 1 recites a system that includes, *inter alia*, a central control unit coupled to at least two control apparatuses of at least two medically applicable instruments. The central control unit is coupled to input and/or output connections of the at least two control apparatuses. The central control unit includes at least one processor that receives output signals from the at least two control apparatuses and converts the output signals into a unified format.

Wang et al. fails to disclose or fairly suggest a central control unit having a processor that converts output signals from multiple control apparatuses into a unified format. Page 3 of the Office Action points to column 2, lines 3-22 of Wang et al. for a teaching of converting output signals into a unified format. This portion of Wang et al. simply discloses "means for converting selection commands and control commands into corresponding selection signals and control signals." It is respectfully submitted that this disclosure is not suggestive of converting output signals into a unified format, because this portion of Wang et al. makes no mention of use of a unified format, let alone converting output signals into a unified format.

By converting output signals from multiple control apparatuses into a unified format, the central control unit facilitates integrating apparatuses and systems from difference manufacturers (apparatuses and/or signals having, for example, different

¹ Wang et al. does not qualify as prior art under 35 U.S.C. §102(b). MPEP 706.02(a)(II)(A) states that

[I]f the publication or issue date of the reference is more than 1 year prior to the effective filing date of the application (MPEP § 706.02), the reference qualifies as prior art under 35 U.S.C. 102(b).

The present application has a filing date of November 18, 2003, which is less than one year after the November 4, 2003 issue date of Wang et al. Therefore, Wang et al. does not qualify as prior art under 35 U.S.C. §102(b). Accordingly, the above-identified rejections will be addressed as if they were made under 35 U.S.C. §102(e).

Serial No. 10/715,962

input and output specifications and different manufacturer-specific protocols). Wang et al. is silent with respect to this claimed feature.

In addressing the earlier-presented arguments regarding this deficiency of Wang et al., page 6 of the Office Action states,

Wang et al. disclose that the control system may include audio and video outputs which are capable of alerting the user to errors in selecting, or controlling specific devices. The audio and video outputs may additionally be used to alert the user to problems with each of the specific devices as well as to provide status notices as to which device(s) are available, which devices are active, as well as a host of other device operation information (see Col. 3, Lines 49-57).

It is unclear how the above relates to converting output signals into a unified format. None of the other cited references, including Helmreich et al., Howell et al., and Cochran et al., taken alone or in combination, cure the deficiencies of Wang et al.

For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 and claims 2, 3, 6, 9-10 and 19 dependent therefrom distinguish patentably over the references of record. Accordingly, the rejections should be withdrawn.

Claim 11 recites a method for operating at least two medical instruments that are coupled to and exchanging data and/or information with at least one control apparatus. The method includes, *inter alia*, converting received output signal data into a unified format, and transmitting the converted data to a single, central display device coupled to the central control unit.

As discussed above, none of the cited references, taken alone or in combination, are understood to disclose or fairly suggest converting received output signal data into a unified format, and transmitting the converted data to a single, central display device coupled to the central control unit.

For at least these reasons it is respectfully submitted that claim 11 and claims 12 and 15-16 dependent therefrom distinguish patentably over the references of record. Accordingly, the rejections should be withdrawn.

Claim 20 recites a system that includes, *inter alia*, a central control unit coupled to input and output connections of at least two medically applicable instruments via at least two control apparatuses, and a single, central input and output display device

Serial No. 10/715,962

coupled to the central control unit via a bus, wherein the bus provides electrical separation between the single, central input and output display device and the central control unit.

The Examiner acknowledges that Wang et al. fails to disclose or fairly suggest a single, central input and output display device coupled to a central control unit via a bus. The Examiner relies on Cochran et al. to cure this deficiency of Wang et al. It is respectfully submitted that this reliance is misplaced because Cochran et al. is understood to disclose multiple input devices and/or output display devices. By way of example, Figure 1 and the accompanying explanatory text of Cochran et al. discloses a foot control assembly 15 along with a flat panel display 5, which are understood to be multiple input devices, rather than a single, central input and output display device, as is recited in claim 20.

Because none of the cited references, taken alone or in combination, cure the deficiencies of Wang et al. in combination with Cochran et al., it is respectfully submitted that claim 20 and claims 21-23 dependent therefrom distinguish patentably over the references of record. Accordingly, the rejections should be withdrawn.

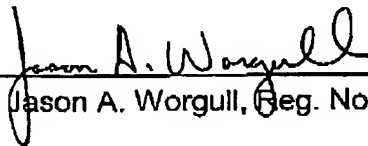
Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, request is made for timely issuance of a notice of allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

RENNER, OTTO, BOISSELLE & SKLAR, LLP

By



Jason A. Worgull, Reg. No. 48,044

1621 Euclid Avenue
Nineteenth Floor
Cleveland, Ohio 44115
(216) 621-1113

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